

The Shooting Gallery: Julian's Private Scrapbook, Book 3
Eldot

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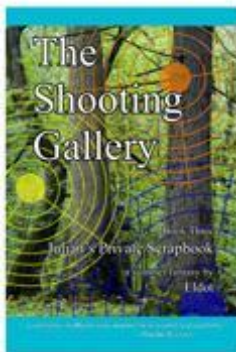
In part three of Julian's private scrapbook, 15 year-old Julian Forrest's odyssey continues. As suggested by the extended title, it is indeed a homoerotic fantasia, with a crucial difference. It is set within the detailed context of Camp Walker, a boy scout camp, with simple, exhilarating, all-male joys. Swimming naked, canoeing, archery, hiking, forestry; earning merit badges and enjoying the camaraderie of buddies, with a noteworthy absence of toxic pissing contests. Like similar, benign, men-only communities, they do inspections and dutifully make their beds, cook for each other, and plan funny skits. They help each other with skills sets like holding a bow properly, how to navigate a canoe across a lake, adjusting their uniforms just so, and plenty of banter and unabashed sharing to boot. They giggle and shake hands and josh and fart as if nothing could be more hilarious. It's really very touching, maybe because they can be themselves, without girls to impress. (Hey, I can't get the hang of this life vest. - No worries, man, it's easy-peasy. Here.) Eldot has a vivid feel for the energy and chemistry of guys enjoying the company of guys. And, yes, sometimes impulsively engaging with other blokes to appease a spontaneous boner.

Julian is crushing pretty hard on Scoutmaster Mark Schaefer, but he's too sweet and deferential to push or be inappropriate. Mark is well aware of Julian's attempts to catch a glimpse of him naked, and takes it all in stride. After all, many boys, straight or gay, are curious about other guys, and Mark gets it. Right away Mark realizes the extent of Julian's naivete, and insists that they share his cabin, lest Julian fall prey. Mark genuinely cares for Julian, and would never exploit Julian's feelings. He addresses Julian as a scoutmaster and a friend, answering his questions honestly. Keeping him safe, while encouraging him. Mark understands boys and men, and never shames Julian for his curiosity or intrepid desire to understand his burgeoning sexuality. When he gives Julian a talk about using careful judgment in certain circumstances, Julian gets the gravitas while feeling empowered to learn and grow. None of this, or anything else in Eldot's novels, is tongue in cheek. Not really. He never indulges in the winking, or salacious nudging so common in queer erotica.

And Eldot doesn't neglect the supporting cast. Nick and Tom discover unexpected intimacy in their sexual capers. Sid and Julian catch Doug and Paul getting oral

skinny, and Kurt the muscle guy, find impulsive joy by experimenting on each other. Eldot introduces Geoff Staples, a beautiful Hawaiian boy, who is not at all shy (though discreet) when it comes to his desires and demonstrating formidable skill. In a delightful episode, Andy and Tony catch up with Tom on the trail and engage in some gorgeous, adventurous ways of sparking ecstasy. Throughout all of this, Julian brings such utter kindness and unpretentiousness, that he earns the affection and respect of all the guys. His impulsive bravado gets them jazzed; fills them with sublime glee. It's important to note here, the friendly, playful group dynamic that Eldot creates. It is a sad fact that when The Barr Meadow series is set (the early 60's) intolerance and persecution of the Gay Community was prevalent. Ruined lives wasn't the worst of it. It's also a disgrace that though it's gotten better, ignorance and abuse persist to this day. Eldot's halcyon gathering, where straight and gay chaps rock their mutual sexuality in't far off the mark. It's not exactly front page news that teenage guys have rampant libidos. Even after the age of majority, many men, given the right circumstances (often the absence of women) have no problem with same gender sexuality. Wherever they take it, they can move ahead without shame.

Eldot embraces the unspoken truth that guys can explore each other's eroticism without humiliation or self-loathing, if they know how; especially when surrounded by enlightened buddies. Eldot's prose is measured and down-to-earth, without the purple, hyperbolic descriptions that too often define man to man queer erotic literature. We go inside the character's heads and learn about their boldness, their reasoning, their graciousness, their insecurities, their eagerness to find the sybaritic realm of pleasuring. The encounters are plain-spoken and enjoyable, set within a plausible context, and not too formal to discuss the first time you connect, with amazing results. The Shooting Gallery culminates in a funny, randy, circle jerk competition; fifteen guys, glorying in bouncing erections, go off like rockets, if you'll excuse a flight of fancy.



QRS Highest recommendation

